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ABSTRACT

The fourth document in an eight-part series on a task-based management system for special education programs describes the need for and development of the Behavioral Characteristics Progression (BCP), a tool for relating educator tasks to pupil progress as based upon learner objectives. The BCP is an array of 1,800 behavioral characteristics of mentally and behaviorally handicapped pupils which have been grouped into 45 categories of behavior called behavior strands. The BCP is said to provide a common jargon and format to use in discussion concerning the pupil and his progress, to offer a means of recording learner objectives and pupil progress in observable and measurable terms, to provid a basis for determining staff performance of educational tasks as correlated positively with pupil progress, and to facilitate teacher selection of behavioral objectives. The BCP chart arranges the behavioral strands according to complexity and developmental progression whereas the BCP booklet is arranged to facilitate recording of pupils' characteristics relative to a given behavior strand. Field testing of the BCP is reported. (For related information, see EC 050 205 through EC 050 207 and EC 050 209 through EC 050 212.) (GW)

A GUIDE FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

MENTALLY AND BEHAVIORALLY EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

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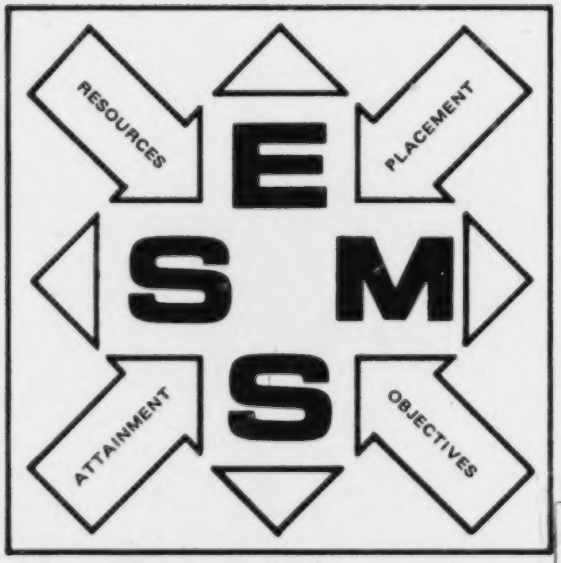

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4.0 THE BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS PROGRESSION (BCP)

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COMPONENT 4.0

THE BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS PROGRESSION (BCP)

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4.0 TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION		PAGE
4.1	Need for the Behavioral Characteristics Progression (BCP)	4-1
4.2	Description of the BCP	4-2
4.3	Development of BCP-1	4-5
4.4	Field Testing Phase	4-6
4.5	Development and Field Testing of BCP-2	4-8
4.6	Final Revision	4-9
4.7	Time Requirement	4-12
4.8	Application to Varied Populations	4-14

4.1 NEED FOR THE BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS PROGRESSION (BCP)

The Behavioral Characteristics Progression (BCP) is a tool necessary to relate educator tasks to pupil progress, as based upon learner objectives. Locating no tools which could serve this major need of the special education management system, the project staff developed one which could act as a communication tool, an accountability tool, an evaluation tool, an assessment instrument, and an instructional instrument. This multi-purpose tool, the Behavioral Characteristics Progression, is the cornerstone of A Guide for the Management of Special Education Programs, Mentally and Behaviorally Exceptional Children. It ensures that the pupil remains the focal point of all educational tasks.

Acting as a communication tool, the BCP provides all those involved directly or indirectly with the pupil's educational program (teacher, parent, support staff, administrator, legislator) with a common jargon and format to use in discussions concerning the pupil and his progress. As an accountability tool, the BCP offers a means of recording learner objectives and pupil progress to justify the need for educational resources (funding, staffing, materials). As an evaluation tool, the BCP provides a basis for determining staff performance of educational tasks as correlated positively with pupil progress. As an assessment tool, the BCP provides the teacher or other diagnostician with a comprehensive charting of pupil behaviors in observable, measurable terms. As an instructional tool, the BCP aids the special education teacher in developing individualized, relevant and appropriate learner objectives for each pupil.

The BCP, although designed to fill the specific needs of the special education management system, also will provide an effective tool for educators attempting to implement the provisions of the Stull Bill. According to this bill, now Education Code Sections 13485-89, district and county school boards must establish "standards of expected student progress in each area of study and of techniques for

assessment of that progress." Also mandated by this bill, the competency of certificated personnel will be measured by the degree to which students have met or exceeded these standards of pupil progress. The BCP offers to school boards and administrations a technique of measuring pupil progress in a clearly visible format and, to teachers, a means of assessing a pupil's need areas and of prescribing individualized learner objectives to fill those needs. These functions (and others not specified in the Stull Bill) can be served by one comprehensive tool: the Behavioral Characteristics Progression.

4.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE BCP

The Behavioral Characteristics Progression is an array of 1,800 observable qualities or traits of mentally and behaviorally handicapped pupils referred to as behavioral characteristics. It takes the form of a continuum of these behavioral characteristics, without regard for age or labels, grouped into 45 categories of behavior called behavioral strands. Behavioral strands begin with the most primary characteristics and progress developmentally toward more complex characteristics. The strands end with advanced behavioral characteristics which closely approximate what society considers "appropriate" or usual adult behaviors for specific situations. Also included with the BCP are Identifying Behaviors for each of the behavioral strands which describe some of the handicapping behaviors pupils might display. These identifying behaviors assist the teacher in focusing on the basic need areas of the pupil and in determining priorities of behavioral objectives.

The Behavioral Characteristics Progression has two formats. The primary form is the BCP Chart. On the chart the behavioral strands are arrayed vertically, with the most primary strands at the top and the most complex strands at the bottom, and horizontally, progressing developmentally from left to right. Such an ordering permits a two-dimensional display of the child's development. Identifying Behaviors appear in the space which separates the strand title (e.g., Health, Visual Motor I) from

behavioral characteristics 1.0 through 50.0. A behavioral characteristic can be located by noting the strand title and column number in which it appears. The columns are numbered across the top of the chart but may not reflect exact developmental sequencing or spacing. For example, the developmental time between increments 15.0 and 16.0 on one strand may not equal that for the same increments on another strand or for increments 16.0 and 17.0 on the same strand. The numbering system is used primarily to assist in location of characteristics and also to denote that 15.1, 15.2, 15.3, etc., can be added by the teacher if it is determined that there are behavioral steps between 15.0 and 16.0 which are not included in the BCP.

The BCP chart is used to display the behavioral characteristics in a manner that permits visual consideration of behavioral relationships. Specific behaviors do not develop independently of other behaviors; they are influenced by and have influence upon the total behavior of the pupil. For example, when a child is learning to walk, the instructor often says "come to me" and holds out his arms. The child is thus being instructed in at least two different areas, language comprehension and gross motor development. The two-dimensional BCP chart provides a perspective of behavior which helps the instructor see behavioral interactions and thus determine realistic and comprehensive behavioral objectives for the pupil.

The BCP is in a progression form to facilitate teacher selection of behavioral objectives. After determining the pupil's behavioral characteristics, it is intended that the teacher consider the increments which follow these characteristics (or increments which have been skipped) on the specific strand as possible objectives. For example, if a pupil displays all behavioral characteristics to 19.0 on a certain strand, an appropriate objective may be determined by considering characteristics 20.0, 21.0, and so on, in that strand. Or if a pupil displays characteristics 1.0 and 3.0, 2.0 should be considered as a possible objective. Choice of objective is the teacher's decision since he is in the best position to judge time, materials, and staff constraints.

The second format of the Behavioral Characteristics Progression is the BCP Booklet, which is used during initial observations to record the pupil's behavior. Each behavioral strand is one or more pages in the booklet, and on each page there are columns for observations of six pupils. A teacher can use one or more booklets per class, depending on how many pupils are being assessed. The booklet format makes it easy to record each child's characteristic relative to a strand, whether he is displaying the characteristic by himself or whether the class is engaged in a group activity. Full descriptions of identifying behaviors appear at the top of the first page of each strand. The following is a sample portion of a BCP page.

4

DRINKING ← Behavioral Strand

IDENTIFYING BEHAVIORS:

Dribbles while drinking ● Spills liquids while drinking from cup/glass ● Spills liquid contents when lifting cup ● Sucks straw without obtaining any liquid ● Spills liquids while pouring into a cup/glass ● Gulps liquids ● Tries to drink from water fountain unsuccessfully

columns for pupil observations

Date of observation _____

Behavioral characteristics

		1	2	3	4	5	6
1.0	Sucks liquid from straw held by adult						
2.0	Takes liquids from cup/glass when cup held by adult						
3.0	Swallows liquids from cup/glass						

Because of the precision and breadth of the BCP, initial observations and determination of a pupil's behavioral characteristics may require a significant amount of time. The time period depends upon the behavioral level of the pupil, the observer's knowledge of the pupil's behavior, his skill in behavioral observation, and how closely the BCP content and the school's educational program are matched. However, once the pupil's description has been completed, the teacher has a behavioral baseline* from which objectives and, later, characteristic descriptions can be readily determined. During subsequent assessments of the pupil, the BCP booklet may no longer be used. The observer need only consider on the chart those few increments of behavior located near the pupil's behavioral characteristics and objectives. It is during these later evaluations that the BCP can actually save time, especially for those teachers who previously prepared lesson plans, goals and objectives without the aid of an ongoing assessment-instructional tool.

4.3 DEVELOPMENT OF BCP-1

The initial concept of a developmentally progressing chart of behavioral characteristics grew out of project staff discussions with consultants in the field of mental retardation. Several decisions concerning format and content were made by the staff early in the chart's development.

The first of these decisions concerned wording of characteristics. It was decided that as a reliable measuring stick for the educational process, the characteristics used to describe and distinguish a child's educational status would be most meaningful if observable and objective; in other words, they must be behavioral characteristics. Capabilities or potentials of a handicapped child would not be considered as his behavioral characteristics since, as such, they would allow opportunities for individual interpretation or guesswork. Behavioral characteristics, it was decided, would represent a pupil's

* Definitions of these terms are found in appendix 8-1 at the back of this document.

behaviors as demonstrated by the pupil and observed by another.

The second consideration concerned labeling the behavioral characteristics on the chart according to age or level or type of handicap. Such labels have been found to be helpful to educators by indicating what behaviors to expect of a pupil of a given mental age or type of handicap. However, labels have also served to limit a pupil's progress. It was decided to eliminate all labels from the BCP chart since a progression format would provide the educator with behaviors which occur at approximately the same developmental stage. However, without any labels on the chart, a pupil's progress would not as likely be stopped when he reached his "potential". (For further discussion on the effects of labeling handicapped pupils, see Appendix 8.7).

With the above two decisions made--to phrase all characteristics in observable terms and to eliminate all labels from the chart--the project staff began reviewing all available assessment tools, developmental charts, and curriculum guides. (See Appendix 8.8 for complete listing.) Behavioral characteristics appearing in the majority of these materials were included in the developmental progression. Characteristics which were too general to be observable or which were potentials, rather than demonstrated abilities, were reworded so as to meet the previously determined criterion of behavioral characteristics. From the information available at that point, a preliminary draft of the Behavioral Characteristics Progression (BCP) was developed.

4.4 FIELD TESTING PHASE

This preliminary draft was then field-tested by the project staff. Nine pupils enrolled in Santa Cruz County's Development Center for Handicapped Minors (DCHM) and trainable mentally retarded (TMR) special training classes were assessed on the BCP chart. From this initial test, the feasibility

of using such an assessment-instructional instrument was determined. Several sequence and content revisions were made as a result of the information obtained from pupil observations.

Santa Cruz County's DCHM and TMR teachers were asked at this stage to offer their expertise and comments regarding the BCP format, content, and sequence. A major revision followed and a final field test version of the BCP was printed in August, 1971. It offered approximately 1,000 behavioral characteristics grouped into 29 behavioral areas or strands.

An extensive field test of this chart, called BCP-1, was begun in September, 1971. Six programs, with a total pupil population of 415, volunteered for the field test. Of this total, 140 pupils were enrolled in Development Centers, 175 in TMR programs, and 100 in programs for children with emotional/psychological problems. A list of programs and individual staff members participating in this testing phase appears in Appendix 8.6.

BCP field testing followed a well-defined schedule. First, prospective participants were given an introductory lecture-discussion to ensure that they understood the purposes of the BCP and were willing to offer criticism and suggestions for improvement throughout the field test. They were then requested to familiarize themselves with the BCP materials before the next meeting. One or two workshop sessions followed in which procedures for BCP use were reviewed task by task. Questions were answered at this time and suggestions on how to improve the procedures themselves were elicited. During these workshops, the project staff assisted the field test participants in determining realistic schedules for BCP observations. Field testing was then begun and was monitored by the project staff at least every 3 to 4 weeks. During this monitoring, suggestions were offered to the participants on methods of observation; criticisms, suggestions, and comments made by the participants were recorded; questions from the participants were answered; and in some cases, assistance in pupil observation was provided

by the project staff. Throughout the field testing period, participants filled out BCP Evaluation Forms and forwarded them to the project staff. This feedback technique ensured that if the project staff was not available to hear criticisms and suggestions, all comments would be recorded for later review. A final meeting was held at the completion of the testing during which time participants summarized their conclusions regarding the BCP.

Field testing was viewed as a two-way process. Programs using the BCP gained a useful method of recording baseline behavioral data on their pupils and determining relevant learner objectives to meet their pupils' needs. The project staff received invaluable feedback as to the format, content, sequencing, applicability, readability, and time requirements of the BCP.

4.5 DEVELOPMENT AND FIELD TESTING OF BCP-2

During the field testing stage of BCP-1, a second BCP was being developed to chart the behavioral characteristics of behaviorally exceptional children. Few available assessment tools, developmental charts or curriculum guides were concerned with the behavioral areas (e.g., impulse control) in which pupils classified as educationally handicapped have the greatest need of improvement. For this reason, the project staff carried out extensive research on exceptional behavior (see Appendix 8.9) and conducted many classroom observations of programs serving pupils in this category (see Appendix 8.5 for a listing of classes visited). From the information obtained through this research and observation, a mock-up version of BCP-2 was constructed.

The project staff then conducted several consultations with educators at all levels of the school system. The mock-up BCP-2 chart was used to illustrate the BCP concept and to offer some of its content

in sample behavioral areas such as impulse control. Added to this chart was a section titled "Identifyin Behaviors" which appeared in a space before each strand. Under this heading were listed some of the problem behaviors associated with each strand. From these consultations, it was concluded that a progressive listing of the characteristics of behaviorally exceptional pupils was possible and needed.

More research and assessment tools were reviewed and in January, 1972, a preliminary version of BCP-2 was printed. Field testing on a pupil population of 50 was begun shortly thereafter. Of this group, 40 were educationally handicapped pupils and 10 were emotionally disturbed. Field testing followed the same schedule as that determined for testing of BCP-1, including workshops, monitoring, continuous evaluation, and meetings of participants. Participants are listed in Appendix 8.6. Testing was completed in April of 1972.

Throughout this period of field testing, the BCP was shown to recognized authorities in the field of special education, to conference and convention participants, and to administrators and teachers with whom the project staff had contact. All suggestions, criticisms, and comments made by these people were recorded on evaluation forms.

4.6 FINAL REVISION

With the conclusion of field testing of both BCP-1 and BCP-2 came the final revision of the chart as indicated by feedback from the field, research, observations, and consultations. Including this revision, 220 project staff man-days had been spent on development and field testing of both BCP charts. All BCP evaluation forms were reviewed and their content incorporated into the BCP materials. Several major decisions concerning BCP content and format were made by the project staff based upon all of the available information.

The first decision concerned the number of BCP charts and their applicability to various pupil groups. Although the first BCP was originally designed for mentally exceptional pupils and the second for behaviorally exceptional pupils, it was learned that most pupils display characteristics in behavioral strands on both charts. For example, many emotionally disturbed pupils demonstrate delayed language and motor development, and many mentally retarded pupils display severe behavioral problems. It was decided, therefore, that all behavioral strands should be combined on one Behavioral Characteristics Progression chart. However, it was also learned through field testing that a chart of 45 strands would be so large as to physically restrict its classroom usage. A compromise was reached; two charts would be printed. The first would contain strands in the areas of self-help, perception, motor coordination, and language; the second would contain strands in the areas of social skills, academics, recreational skills, and vocational skills. It would be suggested that the teacher evaluate each pupil on the chart most applicable to his behavioral level as well as on individually selected strands from the second chart. The more strands charted, the more complete the baseline data on the pupil and the more closely matched learner objectives and pupil needs would become.

A second decision concerned the specific nature of behavioral characteristics. In order that behavioral characteristics be useful as descriptors of pupil behavior, the project staff decided that the characteristics should be specific enough to permit observation yet at the same time be practical. For example, the mentally and behaviorally exceptional child often exhibits a short attention span. Would a characteristic on the level of "exhibits normal length attention span" be helpful to a teacher attempting to describe a pupil to his parents? It seems unlikely, since such a characteristic would probably omit all the steps a pupil takes to progress from a short attention span to a normal one. Also, the word "normal" should be replaced with a more objective description. To solve this latter problem, a specified amount of time can be substituted for the word "normal", thus resulting in a characteristic

"exhibits a 5 to 10 minute attention span." However, this still represents a very general behavior leaving the possibility of differing individual interpretation. What exactly is an attention span? Is it possible to define this characteristic in operational terms; in terms of observable behaviors? Replacing attention span with something more specific could result in "Attends to task for 5 to 10 minutes when supervised." However, as most teachers would agree, whether the pupil likes the task makes a difference in his attention span. With this addition, the behavioral characteristic appears as it does on the BCP chart (#15.0 on Attention Span): "Attends to easy/familiar task for 5 to 10 minutes when supervised." This seems more useful than the original general characteristic. However, how does one know when to stop this breaking down of behavior into increasingly specific increments? Couldn't the word "task" be further defined in terms of what in particular the pupil is working on? This might result in "draws shapes for 5-10 minutes when supervised." And then the types of shapes could be specified. One could proceed until he reaches a point of diminishing returns, when the usefulness of specifics begins to decrease. The more specific the behavioral characteristic becomes, the more limited is its application. A tradeoff must be made between these two aspects: precision of behavioral description and limitation of behavioral description.

The behavioral characteristic is meant to be a behavioral description, neither mechanical nor inflexible. "Strikes with bat a large stationary ball" (#28.0 on Gross Motor II) is an adequately specific characteristic. This behavior need not be separated into all its component parts--holds bat in hands, plants feet, shifts weight, straightens elbows, twists wrists, and connects bat with ball. Such an analysis doesn't give a true representation of the way in which human behavior occurs. At a certain point in breaking down behaviors, the increments become mechanical rather than human.

Besides being adequately precise and practical, the project staff wanted to ensure that behavioral characteristics on the BCP were flexible enough to be useful indicators of a pupil's knowledge and skills. The authors do not want observers to become locked into the wording of a given characteristic. If another

behavioral means of demonstrating knowledge or skills is observed which differs only in wording from that offered on the BCP, it should be considered just as valid. For example, there are many methods which can be used to determine if a pupil visually discriminates between shapes. "Matches circles, squares, triangles, diamonds" (#48 on Visual Motor I) is the one offered by the BCP. However, if the pupil demonstrates in some other behavioral way that he visually "knows" the difference between the shapes (e.g., he points to circles, squares, triangles, diamonds on request), the observer should note how the pupil demonstrated this knowledge and consider #48 to be one of the pupil's characteristics.

The final decision of the project staff, therefore, was to stress that the Behavioral Characteristics Progression is a guide for special educators. The BCP is not intended to subordinate the pupil to its "correctness." Those who teach exceptional pupils know that all pupils do not follow the same developmental sequence. The BCP is to be used to guide the teacher in identifying and communicating to others which behavioral characteristics a pupil displays and which he does not. If the BCP is to continue serving this function, it will require an open dependence upon ongoing study of pupil behavior and careful periodic revision. Funding to enable this revision has been provided by Title III and will continue through June, 1973. The revision also depends upon feedback from those in the field using the BCP. Any comments recorded on the BCP Evaluation Form (See end of Components 6.0 and 7.0) and forwarded to Santa Cruz County Office of Education will be appreciated.

4.7 TIME REQUIREMENT

The most common alteration suggested during the field test phase of the BCP concerned the amount of time required to observe and record pupil behavior. Most participants incorporated the BCP into the existing instructional program and spent 1-2 hours per day for 4-6 weeks on observations of 10 pupils.

Although field test participants found that the amount of time spent on the BCP correlated directly with the amount of pupil information which resulted, the project staff felt the need to decrease the time requirements.

One suggestion offered to accomplish this is to decrease the number of strands in which the pupil is assessed. Rather than observing all pupils in 23+ strands, the teacher may choose the areas most necessary for each individual pupil (possibly 5-10 strands). The Identifying Behaviors portion of the BCP chart could assist the teacher in this selection by indicating in which strands the pupil displays the greatest number of problem behaviors. Decreasing the number of strands observed decreases the time required to use the BCP. However, it should be pointed out to anyone contemplating this short-cut procedure that it also decreases the amount of information obtained on the pupil and decreases the likelihood that learner objectives will be closely matched to pupil needs.

The second and preferred option the project staff offers does not decrease the amount of time but rather the length of the time period required to use the BCP. It is suggested that school districts implementing the BCP designate the first 3-4 weeks of school as primarily diagnostic, rather than instructional. These first weeks would be spent in concentrated BCP observations to determine what should best be taught during the remainder of the school year. The thoroughness of the baseline data which the BCP offers could greatly assist the classroom teacher in developing learner objectives toward which his future educational tasks can be directed. Instead of continuing instruction and spending only part of each day observing for 4-6 weeks, it is suggested that the teacher devote as much of each day as possible (approximately 4-6 hours) to observing pupil behavior until the BCP procedures are completed and objectives for each pupil are determined. By allowing teachers this initial period of time for BCP diagnosis and prescription, school districts would ensure that the teacher begins the school year with an accurate behavioral picture and up-to-date learner objectives for new as well as previously enrolled pupils. Field test participants consulted on this matter agreed that the time required to complete the BCP would

not be excessive if instruction could be curtailed during the BCP assessment period, as the above plan suggests.

4.8 APPLICATION TO VARIED POPULATIONS

The Behavioral Characteristics Progression was designed for and can be used to assess mentally and behaviorally exceptional pupils at all levels. It is applicable to retarded pupils from the profoundly retarded to the mildly retarded, as well as to educationally handicapped pupils from the seriously-emotionally-disturbed to the EH pupil who spends only part of his day in a special class. Since most of the behavioral strands offer a progression beginning with normal infant behavioral characteristics and ending with normal adult behavioral characteristics, most pupils in public, private, and state hospital schools can be assessed on the BCP.

Generally speaking, the BCP is stronger at the low end of the progression (i.e., behavioral characteristics toward the 1.0 end). The project staff, therefore, is very interested in receiving feedback from those who teach older TMR, EMR, EH, and normal pupils regarding the BCP's use with these populations. In an attempt to improve the BCP's applicability to these populations, the Homemaking, Kitchen, Outdoor and Pre-Vocational Skills strands were recently added. Since these strands have not yet been field tested, BCP users are cautioned in regard to their preliminary sequence and content. All suggestions concerning these and other strands will be greatly appreciated. (See BCP Evaluation Form at end of Components 5.0 and 6.0).

The Behavioral Characteristics Progression has been successfully field tested on the following pupil populations:

- DCHM pupils in self-contained classes
- DCHM pupils in rotating classes
- TMR pupils in modular scheduled classes
- TMR pupils in self-contained classes
- MDM pupils in self-contained classes
- MDM pupils in state hospital self-contained classes
- EH pupils in self-contained classes
- EH pupils in residential facility self-contained classes
- Problem pupils in regular elementary school classes

Programs on rotating or modular scheduling found it necessary to spend more time planning and scheduling BCP observations than those on self-contained scheduling since in the former, many teachers observe each pupil. In these programs, each teacher was given his own booklet and assigned a number of strands (generally the areas in which the teacher was responsible for instruction) in which to observe all pupils and determine objectives. Homeroom teachers were responsible for transferring all booklet information to the charts for pupils in their classes. Charts were displayed in the homeroom class. For large programs on modular or rotational scheduling it is suggested that someone other than the teachers transfer booklet information to the chart. Such a task takes some time but requires little interpretation and might easily be accomplished by secretarial staff, aides, or responsible volunteers. In general, programs operating on a schedule which involves many teachers with each pupil follow the procedures offered in Component 5.0 of this document. Since tasks listed might be shared, responsibilities should be carefully outlined before observation begins. During 1972-73, project staff will be available for consultation in this matter.

Programs operating self-contained classes for mentally or behaviorally exceptional pupils should follow the procedures in Component 5.0. The teacher and aide may share tasks within the classroom but

it is suggested that the teacher be given prime responsibility for observation and objectives determination.

The following component, 5.0, offers detailed steps to be completed to assess a pupil using the BCP. Component 6.0 presents the BCP content in observation booklet form. The BCP chart itself is located at the back of this document.